

## Then Yisrael saw Yosef's sons and he said, "Who are these?" And Yosef said to his father, "They are my sons whom G-d has given me here." (48:8,9)

*Rashi* quotes the *Midrash* which explains that, although Yaakov *Avinu's* vision was impaired, he would still have been able to see the two young men standing before him. Instead, they explain that, *Mi eileh?* "Who are these?" is a reference to descendants of Menashe and Efraim, whose nefarious activities precluded them from deserving blessing. Yaakov wondered – "How did they get into this family? They certainly do not have a reason to warrant blessing." Yosef assured his father that his two sons had been begotten through a marriage of sanctity with a *kesubah*, kosher marriage contract, and that, indeed, they were worthy of blessing. They would have wicked descendants, but they themselves were holy and pure.

After all is said and done, what did Yosef gain by showing his *kesubah* to Yaakov? If his sons were going to produce a posterity that was evil and unworthy of blessing, does it make a difference who they presently were? The **Chida** quotes the *Ri Galanti*, who expounds on a well-known question concerning Yishmael. The Torah (*Bereishis* 21:17) teaches us that Hashem listened to the cry of the young Yishmael. The angel of Hashem told Hagar, Yishmael's mother, "Fear not, for G-d has heeded the cry of the young – *ba'asher hu sham*, in his present state." *Rashi* explains (based upon the *Talmud Rosh Hashanah* 16b) that Yishmael was judged according to his current actions – now he is righteous. He would not be judged according to the future – but according to the present. The question is asked: This is inconsistent with the fate meted out to the *ben sorer u'moreh*, wayward and rebellious son – who is put to death at a young age, while he is still innocent. The Torah does not want us to wait until he sits at the crossroads, prepared to kill anyone who would not hand over their money to him. Why does the maxim of *ba'asher hu sham*, which applies to Yishmael, not apply to the *ben sorer u'moreh*, as well?

The *Chida* explains that it all depends on a person's *yesod*, foundation. The *ben sorer u'moreh* is the product of a marriage that was permitted only because of a unique *Halachic* dispensation permitting a *yefas toar*, beautiful captive. His father forced the issue due to his unbridled lust for this woman. Rather than have him act wantonly, he is provided with a one-time dispensation. The child born of this union is a child born of a dispensation, born by forcing the hand of *Halachah*. Thus, he is judged in accordance with his future. He has no present to speak of, and certainly no future; thus, he is executed.

Yishmael, however, was the errant son of Avraham *Avinu*. The Patriarchal pedigree coursed through his veins. The fact that, later in life, he and his descendants would undo all the good in his bloodline does not alter the fact that now he was the product of a good foundation, thus, presently undeserving of punishment. Indeed, Yishmael repented later in life, indicating that something was to be said in respect to his lineage.

Applying this principle, which distinguishes between one who has a strong, proper foundation and one who does not, **Horav Shmuel Yaakov Rubinstein, zl**, Chief Rabbi of Paris, explains Yaakov *Avinu's* quandary. He asked Yosef, "Who are these?" When the Patriarch saw the two sweet, pure sons of Yosef, contrasting with their future progeny who were to be idolaters, who did everything to take down the Jewish People, he wondered, "From where did these come?" What was their foundation, their roots, their origin? If their origin was as negative as their future was to turn out to be, then they were even now unworthy of blessing. If their roots were firmly anchored in faith, commitment and devotion to Hashem, then they should be judged *ba'asher hu sham*, according to the present, and were, therefore, worthy of blessing.